

Music Book Publishing

KURTZ MYERS

IN CENTURIES PAST, writers have tried to write about music in terms of philosophy and mathematics; they have cited parallels in art and literature. In the nineteenth century, writing about music became a profession, a profession practiced on two levels—the level of musical journalism and the level of musicology. The twentieth century has added greatly to the volume of writing about music and probably has widened the gap between the scholarly and the popular writer. But the dilemma of the writer trying to translate music, another language, into the concrete strictures of words remains.

Whatever the frustrations of writing about music, they do not seem to have inhibited the production of music literature. In the postwar period, 1946–57, an average year brought forth 160 new music titles, a considerable number of which originated abroad. About fifty-five were the product of American trade publishers and eleven represented the output of university presses. In these same years great advances were made in the music programs of the schools. In the public schools there has been an expanded and upgraded program of music involving students much more widely in performance. Colleges and universities have composers and string quartets in residence, lively opera workshops and campus symphonies, chairs of musicology, theoretical instruction on an improved level, and many survey courses in the humanities which attempt to expose a greater number of students to the arts. Libraries, large and small, have added recordings to their wares. There has been an immense commercial expansion of the music industry which has not gone unremarked in the mass circulation magazines.^{1, 2} Long play records, high fidelity equipment, musical instruments, and concert tickets are selling in ever-increasing volume.

There are a number of ways in which to survey the recent output of music literature. The most obvious is to examine the music magazines in which it is reviewed, and listed, most extensively: the

Mr. Myers is Chief, Music and Drama Department, Detroit Public Library.

Musical Quarterly, founded in 1915, and *Notes*, founded in 1934, the quarterly journal of the Music Library Association. Both supplement their reviews with lists of new books, international in scope and apparently compiled from the same sources at the Library of Congress. *Notes* reviews a wider range of titles and employs a more diversified panel of reviewers. Incidentally, New York interviews indicate publishers generally seem to appreciate the critical attention which their music titles receive. Virtually all of the periodicals which review books consistently are able to draw upon informed, unpaid reviewers for whom reviewing is a professional responsibility. The reviews are characteristically sincere, detailed, and late. Since 1949 they have been indexed fully in *Music Index*.

It is not surprising that, in looking backwards over twelve years of reviews in *Notes*, one gets an overwhelming impression of concern with musical personalities. Two hundred and nine titles reviewed were biographical or dealt with the creations of a single composer. The tabulation which follows indicates by rough categories the frequency with which various types of music books appeared:

Biographies (life and works)	209
Musicological studies	37
Histories of music	30
"How to" books	28
Bibliographies	22
Essays and criticism (collections)	20
Yearbooks	12
Biographical dictionaries	10
Catalogs	10
Program notes	10
Song books	9
Anthologies of musical examples	5
Thematic indexes	4

Subject matter frequently explored included:

Folk and national music	51
Opera	36
Recordings	27
Vocal music	26
Instrumental music	23
Jazz	22

Music Book Publishing

Sacred music	22
Musical instruments	16
Sound reproduction	14
Contemporary music	14
American music	11
Acoustics	7

One could learn how to sing for money, how to write songs that sell, how to read score, how to memorize, how to conduct. The omnipresent music appreciation books obviously wished to be known by any other name; one reviewer referred to one of them as a "primer for the literate musical illiterate."³ Books of more serious intent flew false flags. *Introduction to the Theory of Music*, by Howard Boatwright (Norton, 1956) and *An Introduction to Music*, by D. O. Boyden (Knopf, 1956) were not beginner's books. The appearance, and continuance, of *Music Index* (Information Service, 1949) filled one of the conspicuous gaps, the need for an index to music periodicals. The Copyright Office in 1947 revamped the *Catalog of Copyright Entries: Published Music* to provide a national music trade bibliography. *Thompson's International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians* was twice revised, as was the *Oxford Companion to Music*. There were two new one-volume dictionaries of music from England and a new fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, greeted with distinctly modified rapture.⁴ But there was still no prospect of an American music encyclopedia which would take advantage of the musical scholarship available in the United States and would become an American equivalent of *Grove* and of Blume's *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.

From the "Quarterly Book List" in the *Musical Quarterly*, information has been drawn to indicate which types of publishers, and which publishers, are responsible for the music literature which appeared between 1946 and 1957. A count indicates a total of 1,908 titles in English. Not every book listed is a piece of music literature but all have a considerable degree of pertinence to the music field. Though double listings and simultaneous publication confuse the issue, it would appear that 68.2 per cent of this total were American publications. Of the 31.8 per cent published abroad, 27.8 were published in the United Kingdom and 4 per cent in English elsewhere in the world, chiefly in Scandinavia and the Netherlands, India, and South Africa.

KURTZ MYERS

The 68.2 per cent representing American imprints can be broken down further by type of publisher:

Trade publishers	35.6%
University presses	7.1
Other educational publishers	7.4
Microfilm publishers	5.4
Music publishers	3.1
Denominational publishers	2.3
Private publishers	2.1
Government agencies	2.0
Scholarly journal off-prints	1.9
Commercial organization	1.3

Educational publishers include libraries, music schools, music associations, and symphony orchestras. Commercial organizations include broadcasting companies and performing rights societies. The microfilm publications are all dissertations and began appearing in 1952.

An insight into the music book publication of fifty years ago, and the publishers involved, can be obtained from Louisa M. Hooper's *Selected List of Music and Books about Music* (American Library Association, 1909), based in part on H. E. Krehbiel's *Music: a Selection from its Literature* (American Library Association, 1897). A more accurate idea of actual holdings can be obtained from the catalogs of the music collections of three public libraries published at about the same time: Worcester (1906), Milwaukee (1913), and the Grosvenor Library, Buffalo (1909). These catalogs reveal a lack of bibliographical resources and reference tools in English (except for Baker and Grove), a plethora of biographies of composers and performers, many guides to playing and singing, and an equal interest in the music of the church and the opera house. Quite a high percentage of the titles were of English origin though in Milwaukee, 20.8 per cent of the titles were in German and at the Grosvenor Library, 18.6 per cent. The publishing field was dominated, in so far as music titles were concerned, by Scribners and G. Schirmer, both of whom were importers of music books and dealers in out-of-print titles, as well as publishers.

Turning to the figures for the 1946-57 period, it is interesting to note that the music publisher has become quite an unimportant factor. Scribners has published only four music titles in the past dozen years. Educational and denominational publishers have become more im-

Music Book Publishing

portant, reflecting indirectly the new standards and prestige of music in schools and churches. The vigor of "organized music," the forty-six music organizations which make up the National Music Council, is another contributing influence. The music titles deriving from commercial organizations, government agencies, and private publishers are small in volume but often unique in format and subject coverage. Though microfilm publication has increased the availability of highly specialized studies it has not been fully accepted as a medium for original publication.⁵

Important series are the "Studies in Musicology" issued by Research Microfilm Publishers, the music titles included in the American theses series issued by University Microfilms, and the "Microcard Publications in Music," issued by the University of Rochester Press. The last-named series makes available theses from the Eastman School of Music and rare books from Eastman's Sibley Library and from the Music Division of the Library of Congress.

Further examination of the *Musical Quarterly* listings makes evident who, among the trade publishers and university presses, are the publishers of music titles. Five trade publishers obviously make a specialty of music literature. Of the 676 titles issued, 189 bore the following imprints: Oxford 50; Philosophical Library 39; Norton 35; Knopf 34; and Macmillan 31. The remaining 487 titles were issued by no less than 142 publishers.

No effort has been made to determine statistically how many of the publications of the five leading firms were original publications. All five issue some titles which originate abroad; the percentage is undoubtedly higher in the cases of Oxford, Macmillan, and Philosophical Library with their continuing British connections. The New York office of Oxford, however, is charged with responsibility for publishing distinctively American titles which will complement the many Oxford music titles originating in England. *The Story of Jazz*, by M. W. Stearns (1956) and *Charles Ives and his Music*, by Henry and Sidney Cowell (1955) are two products of this policy. No music librarian is surprised to find Philosophical Library among the top five on a quantity basis. However, dissatisfaction with this publisher's uneven editorial level, as well as its over-priced and poorly manufactured books, has been expressed repeatedly in *Notes*.⁶ Nor is any music librarian surprised to find among the leaders the firms of Knopf and Norton for, though their objectives are somewhat different, they both have developed consistent, long-range programs for the publication of music titles of quality.

A further breakdown indicates that there are ten firms which published 138 titles; fourteen less active publishers who published a further 103 titles; and a final group of 118 very occasional publishers of music titles who account for the balance of 246 titles. Of all these, only the Merlin Press with its subscription series of eight monographs, and perhaps Coleman-Ross, might be recognized as specialists. However, among the first group of ten will be found firms with flourishing text departments, such as McGraw-Hill and Prentice-Hall, which have published some of the most distinctive music titles of the period and other long-established firms such as Crowell, Holt, Dutton, Doubleday, and Harpers which always have published some music titles. Among newcomers in this group which have indicated pronounced interest in the music field are Simon & Schuster, Crown, and Allen, Towne & Heath (the last named active only during 1947-49 when thirteen titles were published).

Approximately the same degree of specialization is evidenced by the contributions of the university presses. Numerically the ranking presses are Columbia 21, Harvard 14, California 11, Princeton 7, and Oklahoma 7, which produced 60 of the 135 university press music publications. Thirty-one university presses produced the remaining 75 titles. The figures for Columbia represent the combined output of the Columbia University Press, the King's Crown Press, and Teachers' College. Harvard and Princeton are widely recognized for distinguished publications in the field of musicology, works such as the *Historical Anthology of Music*, edited by A. T. Davison and Willi Apel (Harvard, 1946 & 1950) and *The Italian Madrigal*, by Alfred Einstein (Princeton, 1949). The University of Oklahoma Press has been active as a publisher of music books only since 1951 but has developed a distinctive list featuring titles which stand midway between what is feasible for trade publication and what requires the subsidy of an academic press. One recent university press title is memorable for having created a stir beyond the usual limits of interest in music titles, L. B. Meyer's *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (University of Chicago Press, 1956).

In an attempt to learn something of the publishers' attitude, editors of six firms which have been active recently in the publication of music titles were interviewed. These firms and their editors were: Knopf (Herbert Weinstock), McGraw-Hill (C. G. Schaeffer), Macmillan (Richard Repass), Norton (R. E. Farlow), Oxford (John Ward), and Prentice-Hall (L. H. Christie). Farlow was subsequently heard

Music Book Publishing

speaking on some of the same points at the winter meeting of the Music Library Association in Washington, February 28, 1958.

These firms represent a fair sampling of the trade published music books. The titles of McGraw-Hill and Prentice-Hall are closely related to their total textbook program, though both release works which are not part of the textbook list. Macmillan and Oxford are strongly influenced by publications which originate in England. Their lists are diversified, even somewhat miscellaneous, and give more evidence of long-time policy than of long-range planning. Knopf and Norton⁷ are the recognized specialists among trade publishers. Though the academic market is of undoubted importance, especially to Norton, there is a strong feeling that their publication programs are basically the outgrowth of the personal interest of their publisher-owners. The circumstance that two of the most active writers about music, Herbert Weinstock and P. H. Lang, serve in executive or advisory capacities in these two houses has undoubtedly left its mark.

The initial Norton music title was Paul Bekker's *The Story of Music* (1927), an "appreciation book" translated by Mrs. Norton. In the next few years, several similar books were published with modest success, sufficient to prompt the firm to sign a contract in 1936 for an ambitious musicological project, the publication of Gustave Reese's *Music in the Middle Ages* (1940). Formidable commercial problems were involved. Chairs of musicology had been founded at Cornell and Columbia in 1930 and 1933, but musicology was only in its infancy on American campuses. Reese did not occupy as yet his professorship at New York University. His book would be large, involve many music examples and special typesetting, and be slow in reaching the publisher.

What had been intended as one book became two; nineteen years transpired before the second half was printed. But the first volume has had a successful career and has proven that elaborate and distinguished musicological publications are commercially feasible. Reese's book was followed in 1941 by Lang's *Music in Western Civilization* which, though demanding of the reader, also paid its way. These pioneer ventures cleared the path for the further Norton publications of works by Sachs, Bukofzer, and Einstein, and doubtless encouraged others to take chances in a highly specialized and hazardous field.

Some of the problems of musicological publication should be detailed for they are in lesser degree the problems involved in much music book publishing. When such a title as M. F. Bukofzer's *Studies*

in *Medieval and Renaissance Music* (Norton, 1950) is undertaken, the publisher is faced with a text which is long and complicated. To achieve "competence" in editing a musicological manuscript, it must be done by musicologists who become additions to the publisher's regular staff. Similarly translations must be undertaken by linguists who are also competent musicologists. Here one encounters the problem of Teutonisms (or Musicologese) in American musicological writing which has so disturbed Eric Blom.⁸ The book must be produced physically on a high level and its commercial success will depend largely on the extent to which the title can be used in educational institutions. While musicology has developed in this country in amazing fashion since the arrival of the ablest German musicologists in the early thirties, the general public still is not acquainted with its scope, aims, and terminology.

Farlow believes that the present public for books about music exists at two extremes of the reading scale—those who will read *The Bach Reader* (Norton, 1945) and "those who would not read anything beyond the level of tune-detective books and collections of stories of the operas."⁹ The publishing situation will not improve markedly unless the musical literacy of the vast intermediate group is raised. Consequently, it is essential that publication programs be formulated which represent popularization in the best sense of the word. Experienced teacher-authors have to be engaged to prepare books on music appreciation, theory and history, backed by scholarship, and representing the present state of knowledge. Such publications it is hoped will find a reception among the intelligent general readers of the country, the public which presumably accounts for the marked increase in the sale of recordings of classical music.

Promotion of music titles seems to be carried on largely through text salesmen covering the academic market and through direct mail covering the library market and the lay audience. Specialized mailing lists are available and apparently effective. Advertising is placed in specialized music magazines. Selected titles are advertised in weeklies such as the *New Yorker* and the *Saturday Review*. A few are advertised in metropolitan newspapers and over FM stations featuring "good music" programs. A book which benefited from this type of exploitation was Abram Chasins' *Speaking of Pianists* (Knopf, 1957). Music titles are given normal exploitation along with the rest of a firm's catalog and seasonal lists.

The effectiveness of the general bookstore in distributing books

Music Book Publishing

about music is somewhat in doubt. Any large bookstore usually features an attractive section which brings together books on music and the other performing arts, including a liberal representation of ballet picture books and new plays. (Statistically dance titles are counted as music titles but are considered much easier to merchandise, modern dance excepted.) There is some feeling that such displays are window dressing and that general outlets are not particularly effective in sales. A few of the largest music stores carry substantial stocks. Specialized dealers in music literature, conducting mail order businesses, are undoubtedly effective in moving new as well as older music literature.

While bookshops have successfully added recordings and greeting cards as secondary lines, record shops have not been equally successful in adding books. This bears out the experience of some public libraries in trying to persuade the record borrower to take advantage of readily available miniature scores and related books. Sam Goody, who has made a great success of mail order and discount merchandising of records, has begun to experiment recently with a companion book operation.

There have been some experiments in the coordinated publication of music books and recordings which illustrate them. The most elaborate scheme is that undertaken by Oxford. Each volume of the *New Oxford History of Music* is accompanied by a two-disc album of Victor records, recorded in England and known as the *History of Music in Sound*. Also available are a series of *Handbooks for History of Music in Sound*, prepared by specialists under the general editorship of Gerald Abraham, containing elaborate notes on these recordings. A comparable set of records, performed by Danish artists and underwritten by Norton, was issued by the Haydn Society for use with *Masterpieces of Music Before 1750*, edited by Carl Parrish and J. F. Ohl (Norton, 1951). Still another project of this type was *Music of the Bach Family*, a recording of a like-named anthology edited by Karl Geiringer (Harvard, 1955). Folk music is a natural subject for coordinated book-record publishing. Two examples are records produced by Folkways and Riverside to accompany *The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English-speaking World*, edited by A. B. Friedman (Viking, 1956) and *The Ballad Book*, edited by MacEdward Leach (Harper, 1955). Riverside has also issued a recording of all the English and Scottish popular ballads in the Child collection. Jazz would seem to offer similar opportunities but efforts to date have not

advanced beyond the level of commercial tie-ins. Though such schemes have considerable appeal for the educator, they enormously complicate publishing and packaging, and can be successful only if publisher and record company observe the same editorial and manufacturing standards.

Books about jazz constitute one of the paradoxes of music book publishing. Almost every major trade publisher has one on his list and they have begun to appear from the university presses, as witness *The Real Jazz Old and New*, by Stephen Longstreet (Louisiana State University, 1956) and *The Heart of Jazz*, by W. L. Grossman and J. W. Farrell (New York University, 1956). They should enjoy wide appeal and yet they do not seem to enjoy unusual sales. Perhaps too many are similar in approach and too few are contemporary in coverage. Possibly not enough is known about the consumers of jazz. The high school student so often encountered in the public library as he undertakes a "research paper" on jazz, motivated by a hopeful teacher, is probably not a likely buyer. A recent survey¹⁰ in connection with the inauguration of sponsored television programs featuring jazz suggests that the jazz audience is middle-aged, male, and of superior educational and economic status.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of the continued publication of musical biography, all but one editor indicated that there was a declining demand for this type of publication. It would seem that the growing sophistication of the musical public has bypassed the old-fashioned, romanticized biography and is not yet ready for the fully documented, scholarly "life and works" type which is published now with increasing frequency.

Very few music book manuscripts are received unsolicited. Rather, ideas are developed by authors, editors, and salesmen. They are submitted, discussed, transformed. Publishers who make a specialty of music literature retain advisors who can offer counsel on long-term publishing programs, suggest authors, advise on a particular project, criticize manuscripts or translations in process. Publishers with well developed text departments charge their salesmen with responsibility for ferreting out campus talents, imaginative instructors who have material for a book in some state of preparation. A substantial number of music books are still written by free-lance musical journalists, critics of magazines and newspapers, composers, private teachers, and performers.

Music Book Publishing

Upwards of fifty music titles are available in paperback editions.¹¹ A gratifying number of out-of-print classic titles are included and the quality level averages high. However, coverage is most uneven. Conspicuously missing is a history of American music or any treatment of American composers, made doubly evident by the full treatment of English music and musicians in the Penguin titles.

From a commercial standpoint, the publishing of music titles remains a marginal operation. Budgets must be carefully considered and there must be a reasonable "get out" point. Outside the text field, the extent of the public for music books is not known with any degree of accuracy. It will remain a limited public until the basic problem of learning to write about music for the intelligent lay listener is solved. With these factors in mind the publishing record of the 1946-1957 period is astonishing and admirable.

Meanwhile no one is expecting a best-selling music title. At the two extremes, musicologically-oriented books will continue to appear and moderate popular successes in the realm of musical biography, song books, and "how to" books will continue to be hoped for. In the midst of this picture sits the music librarian who ponders the significance of the new mass audience for music and its impact on libraries, publishers, and music itself. Is it encouraging that Berlioz, Richard Strauss, and Stravinsky after ten years of "Lp" have joined Beethoven, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Tchaikovsky on the classical hit parade? That in 1958 Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* is Columbia Records' sales leader rather than Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*? That the original cast recording of *My Fair Lady* has sold more than a million copies and that the production of "mood music" has become an industry in itself?¹² Availability and familiarity of the standard musical repertory, and of old music and contemporary music, are without doubt greater now than ever before. Some of their currency surely represents nothing more than conformity to currently approved social patterns and to an American desire for the companionship of noise. But basically there would seem to be an acceptance of music as a normal part of a full life and as an important aspect of cultural heritage.

Publication of more and better books about music is essential if teachers, librarians, and performers are to capitalize on what would seem to be a very favorable current disposition toward music. But books must be joined by other materials, such as scores and recordings, and by informed and imaginative leadership on the industrial,

professional, and lay levels if a new kind of broad musical understanding is to be built on the encouraging foundations laid in recent years.

References

1. Golden Days—Profits on Platters. *Newsweek*, 50:81-83, Dec. 2, 1957.
2. Singing Land. *Time*, 70:56-61, Dec. 23, 1957.
3. Lowens, Irving: [Review of] Haggin, B. H.: *The Listener's Musical Companion*. New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1956. In: *Notes*, 13:427-428, June 1956.
4. Hill, R. S.: [Review of] Blom, Eric, ed.: *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 5th ed. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1954. In: *Notes*, 12:85-92, Dec. 1954.
5. Duckles, Vincent: [Review of] *Research Microfilm Publishers Studies in Musicology, Series A*. Superior, Wis., Research Microfilm Publishers, 1953. In: *Notes*, 13:650-652, Sept. 1956.
6. Burkat, Leonard: [Review of] Nettl, Paul: *The Book of Musical Documents*. New York, Philosophical Library, 1948. In: *Notes*, 6:312-313, Mar. 1949.
7. Brockway, G. P.: Warder Norton's Idea. *A.L.A. Bulletin*, 51:21-22, Jan. 1957.
8. Blom, Eric, ed.: *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 5th ed. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1954, pp. vi-vii.
9. Farlow, R. E.: Manuscript of Talk at Winter Meeting of Music Library Association in Washington, D.C., Feb. 28, 1958.
10. Place on TV for That Jazz Beat. *Variety*, 209:20+, Dec. 25, 1957.
11. Jablonski, E., and Garson, E.: Music in Your Pocket. *Saturday Review*, 40:43+, May 25, 1957.
12. Lieberman, Goddard: "Lp"—A Profile in Changing Taste; Comments on the "Lp" Decade. Columbia Records Press Release, Mar. 11, 1958.